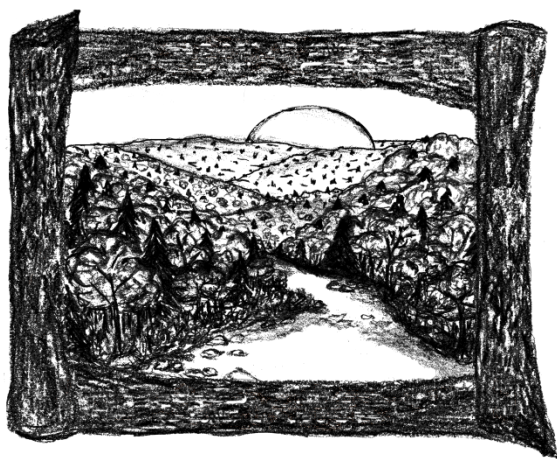

Legacy of the Weeks Act
100 Years of Restoring
America's Forests



One of the great consequences of the Weeks Act is that the public in the eastern United States is still so thoroughly engaged with these forests 100 years later. People see their lives intertwined with the Forest Service and with the lands the agency manages. This living, enduring connection was a gift to future generations that could not have been imagined when the Act was passed."

— Char Miller, Historian

March 1, 2011

*For more Weeks Act information, visit
www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/weeks-act*

As Natural Resources Go, So Goes the Nation

"The conservation of natural resources is the fundamental problem. Unless we solve that problem, it will avail us little to solve all others."

-- Theodore Roosevelt

Following the Civil War, trees fed the voracious appetite of growing cities. Timber production became a modern and highly-specialized industry. Lumber fueled the growth of the young country into a world power, with industrial efficiency, a nation-spanning network of railroads, and an emerging middle class.

Despite America's rise to power, finding work and feeding a family was a desperate struggle for many. Millions moved off the land and into northern industrial cities in search of jobs, including former slaves with freedom but no land... and European immigrants searching for new life in a new land.

Meanwhile, large timber companies cut all the trees in an area and moved on. For towns whose livelihood relied on the

industry, relocation of operations meant the town's decline and possible death.

Lumberjacks left mountains strewn with debris. Fire roared through dead stumps, dry branches, and scrub brush, devastating hundreds-of-thousands of acres each year. Rains clogged streams with eroding soils and fed devastating floods.

The enormous size of the industry raised the possibility that it would cut over the Nation's woodlands, leaving nothing of value to replace the once-majestic pine forests.

A number of conservation organizations pushed for forest conservation in the East, such as the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests and the *Appalachian Mountain Club*.

America's first trained forester, Gifford Pinchot, advocated "the art of producing from the forest whatever it can yield for the service of man," and coined the term *conservation ethic* as applied to natural resources.

He became the first Chief of the Forest Service in 1905, with authority over the newly-renamed National Forests. His work with President Theodore Roosevelt established a framework to protect the West from the devastation experienced on Eastern lands.

Even these extraordinary accomplishments, however, did not restore trees to the barren, privately-owned lands east of the Mississippi. Major forest fires continued while soil erosion and flooding intensified.

More and more citizens demanded protection even as fledgling agencies looked for opportunities to restore the land. conservation organizations demanded protection of the remaining forests and to restore the cut-over lands. They initially focused on New England and the southern Appalachians, but support soon grew in other areas.

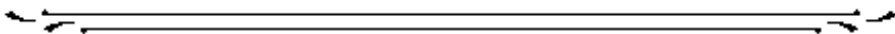
They overcame the strong objections of Speaker of the House, Joe Cannon, who felt the country should not appropriate "one cent for scenery."

Cannon asked Massachusetts Representative John W. Weeks to floor-manage a revised bill that focused on *the navigability of rivers* and *interstate commerce*, and the Weeks Act passed on March 1, 1911.

The Act gave the Forest Service authority to purchase private land for public forests for the very first time, making it possible to create forests in the East. The Act also promoted cooperation between the Forest Service and state and private forest owners.

The result was America's gift to the world: nothing less than the promise and the reality of public forests and public service.

These forests, like the Act itself, were created at the insistence of citizens, and with the consent of states and local governments. This success stands as a monument to their vision, their courage, their initiative, and their ability to create the social willingness to address one of the biggest crises of their time.



Summary of the Weeks Act

Section 1: Agreement between the United States and several States for the purpose of conserving the forests and water supply of the States.

Section 2: Appropriation of \$2 million for fire protection in watersheds, provided that the State has appropriated an equivalent amount for a system of forest fire protection for the same fiscal year.

Section 3: Appropriation of \$1 million for fiscal year 1910, and \$2 million per year thereafter, until 1915, for examination, survey, and acquisition of lands.

Section 4: Established a Congressional National Forest Reservation Commission.

Section 5: Required a report from the Commission to Congress.

Section 6: Required the Secretary of Agriculture to make recommendations and provide reports on lands to acquire, including an examination by the United States Geological Survey.

Section 7: Authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to purchase land with the consent of State Legislatures.

Section 8: Required that land titles were satisfactory to the United States Attorney General and vested in the United States.

Section 9: Details regarding the authorization and title to land, reserving some timber and mineral rights to seller if specified in conveyance.

Section 10 Re-sale of small tracts of agricultural land inadvertently included in federal purchase.

Section 11: Permanently reserved as National Forests.

Section 12: State jurisdiction preserved except for punishment of federal offenses.

Section 13: Five percent of funds received from each forest allocated to State for schools and roads in the counties involved.

Section 14: \$25,000 appropriated for expenses of Commission .

Fulfilling the Promise

*For anything worth having, one must pay the price.
The price is always work, patience, love, self-sacrifice –
no paper currency, no promises to pay,
but the gold of real service.”*

– John Burroughs

The Weeks Act required that a State had to pass enabling legislation before any land could be acquired within its boundaries. Appropriations had to be obtained, staffs developed and trained, and policies and safeguards put into place. Enabling legislation from the States often required approval from various state entities. The Forest Service also made policy to obtain the approval of county officials before any land was acquired within its jurisdiction.

The Weeks Act also established a Congressional Committee, the National Forest Reservation Commission, to screen any proposed Purchase Units and any subsequent purchases.

By March 27, 1911, Henry Graves, Chief of the Forest Service, submitted 13 proposed purchase units to the National Forest Conservation Commission for approval.

They approved 11 of these units, located in the White Mountains of New England and in the southern Appalachians.

Many more Purchase Units were established over the next 18 years. Over half of the new National Forests were established during the Great Depression. Owners were eager to sell lands that had been cut-over and farmed out. Local publics were delighted to see National Forests established nearby because they wanted to bring federal investment to their area, along with a better land conservation and a public land base for all the people.

The creation of these National Forests was a wonder in itself. However, the job had just begun for the Forest Service. Most of these lands had been cut over, burned over, or farmed out. For the first time in its short history, the Agency now had the responsibility of restoring entire forested ecosystems across landscapes. The work included:

- establishing effective fire control,
- stabilizing eroding areas,
- re-vegetating areas where fire and storms had removed much of the topsoil,
- planting trees,
- introducing professional forestry practices,
- dealing with trespass,

- controlling wild hogs,
- improving access to public lands,
- creating and managing recreation facilities,
- conducting inventories, and
- developing management plans for the resources and associated infrastructure.

A great many agencies, organizations, and individuals helped with this effort. One of the most effective in improving the condition of these public lands was the Civilian Conservation Corps of the Great Depression. They planted trees, solved erosion problems, constructed recreation facilities, roads, bridges, dams, and improved fire fighting effectiveness.

One hundred years later, 26 Eastern States are home to 52 National Forests and one National Tallgrass Prairie, encompassing 25,462,914 acres. They include a myriad of forested environments ranging from the White Mountains of New Hampshire to the lakes of northern Minnesota, from the hardwood forests of the southern Appalachians to the piney woods of the coastal plain, and the mixed pine and hardwood forests of the Piedmont.

"It is simply service that measures success."

— George Washington Carver

Public Benefits from Public Forests

"These lands are our lands -- all the lands that most of us will ever own. These lands are ours today and our children's in years to come. Such a birthright stands alone in all the earth."

-- Jack Ward Thomas

There are now 132 Congressionally-designated Wilderness areas where there was once stumps and debris. There are 34 National Wild and Scenic Rivers, 9 National Recreation Areas, 16 Game Refuges and Wildlife Preserves. There are over 27,000 miles of hiking trails, more than 3,700 developed recreation sites, and over 53 million recreation visits to these eastern National Forests annually.

Timber is once more a product from the forests of the East. Streams that were degraded and choked with silt now flow with clear, clean, high-quality water.

Many municipal water supplies depend on National Forest watersheds for a stable source of clean water for their communities. Wildlife habitats were re-established and managed. Those who hunt and fish now enjoy some of the

best outdoor experiences in the East, now that game and fish have returned to many of these cooperatively managed habitats.

Numerous organizations expand the scope and reach of the National Forests through programs administered under land use permits from the Forest Service.

As more Americans move into once-rural areas, the presence of large public forests become increasingly important as places of respite and re-creation.

Today, State and Private Forestry programs provide forest management assistance and expertise to a variety of landowners -- including small woodlot, tribal, state, & federal -- through cost-effective, non-regulatory partnerships. The State and Private Forestry Branch is also responsible for conservation education and urban forestry assistance.

The Research and Development Branch provides benefits to society by developing and communicating the scientific information and technology needed to manage, protect, use, and sustain the natural resources of forest and range land.

The Future of Conservation

*"We are the architects of our own fortune
and the hewers of our own destiny."*

— George Washington Carver

*"If everyone is moving forward together,
then success takes care of itself."*

— Henry Ford

One decade into the 21st Century, Americans face challenges as daunting as any faced by Gifford Pinchot, Theodore Roosevelt, and John Weeks 100 years ago. Today's complex challenges include climate change, water quality, and complex land-ownership patterns, just to mention a few. These issues demand the same vision, courage, and initiative that drove creation of the Weeks Act, including creation of a common social willingness to act on a cause that is bigger than individual differences.

No single person or organization has the expertise, knowledge, funding, or authority to solve these challenges. The issues are bigger than *any* of us, but they are *not* bigger than *all* of us.

That means crossing boundaries and bridging divides – urban and rural, black and white, rich and poor, left and right – working together to become bigger in who we are as individuals and organizations.

That may be difficult to picture, given the current social inequities and political schisms. But the same could be said of the corporate monopolies, government graft, political divisions, racial strife, and struggle for women’s suffrage in John Weeks’ time. Pinchot, Roosevelt, and Weeks couldn’t possibly know the impact of their work at the time, and yet, they worked toward what they knew was right.

And so it is for each of us. We each have an impact on the world, and the only question is, “What will that impact be?”

As at any turning point in history, whenever people step forward and take their place in the world, it comes to this: ordinary people, doing extraordinary things – together, with nothing but their character, vision, and courage – creating the social willingness to take on the challenges of the day.

*“Live your beliefs
and you can turn the world around.”
– Henry David Thoreau*

Appendix A: Weeks Act National Forests in the East & Midwest

State	Year	Initial Name	Forest in 2011
MI	1908	Marquette	Hiawatha
	1909	Michigan	Hiawatha & Huron
	1928	Huron	Huron
	1931	Hiawatha	Hiawatha*
		Ottawa	Ottawa*
	1938	Manistee	Manistee
	1945	Huron Manistee	Huron-Manistee*
MO	1939	Clark	Clark
		Mark Twain	Mark Twain
	1952	Mark Twain Clark	Mark Twain
		Mark Twain	Mark Twain
	1962	Clark	Clark
		Mark Twain Clark	Mark Twain*
MN	1908	Minnesota	Chippewa*
	1928	Chippewa	
	1909	Superior	Superior*

State	Year	Initial Name	Forest in 2011
VT NY	1932	Green Mountain	Green Mountain- Finger Lakes*
	1935	Finger Lakes	
WI	1933	Nicolet	Nicolet
		Chequamegon	Chequamegon
	1995	Chequamegon Nicolet	Chequamegon- Nicolet*
IN OH OH & IN OH & IN	1951	Hoosier	Hoosier
		Wayne	Wayne
		Wayne Hoosier	Wayne-Hoosier
	1994	Wayne	Wayne*
		Hoosier	Hoosier*
IL	1939	Shawnee	Shawnee*
NH & ME	1918	White Mountain	White Mountain*
PA	1923	Allegheny	Allegheny*
WV	1920	Monongahela	Monongahela*

***Bold** lettering indicates the name of the unit in 2011.

Appendix B:

Weeks Act National Forests in the South

Alabama

- Bankhead (William B.)
- Conecuh
- Talladega

Arkansas

- Ouachita
- Ozark-St. Francis

Florida

- Apalachicola
- Ocala
- Osceola

Georgia

- Chattahoochee

Kentucky

- Daniel Boone

Louisiana

- Kisatchie

Mississippi

- Bienville
- Delta
- De Soto

- Holly Springs

- Tombigbee

North Carolina

- Croatan
- Nantahala
- Pisgah
- Uwharrie

Oklahoma

- Ouachita

South Carolina

- Francis Marion-Sumter

Tennessee

- Cherokee

Texas

- Angelina
- Davy Crockett
- Sabine
- Sam Houston

Virginia

- George Washington-Jefferson
-

Appendix C:

Additional Weeks Act Purchase Units

In the Western United States, Weeks Act purchases contributed to over 50 National Forests and Grasslands in 11 states.

*"In the long run, people hit only what they aim at.
Therefore, they had better aim at something high."*

— Henry David Thoreau

*"I ask you to profit from mistakes made elsewhere...
and that you leave your land as a heritage to your children,
increased, and not impaired in value."*

— Theodore Roosevelt



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